BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Helen Kusunoki, 68, homemaker and helper at family-run restaurant

> *"The people came to eat and the lifeguards used to come to eat (too). Naturally, Hawaiian people like to eat their Hawaiian foods. I guess they (brought) their own Hawaiian (foods). So, they suggested to my father, why don't he serve Hawaiian foods? They taught him how to make laulaus and things like that. So he started out small, and (when) people found out that he (served) Hawaiian food, the demand got bigger and bigger. That's how he got into the Hawaiian food (restaurant) and he changed the name to Unique Lunch Room instead of ice-cream parlor."*

Helen Kusunoki was born in Honolulu on July 20, 1918. Her parents, Hisako and Sakazo Tahara Fujika, raised five children and founded the Unique Lunch Room, a popular Hawaiian foods restaurant on the Diamond Head end of Kalākaua Avenue.

Kusunoki attended Waikīkī School and Washington Intermediate School. She completed her formal education at Tsurumi Jogakkō in Japan. She returned to Hawai'i in 1939 and married Jules Kusunoki three years later.

The Kusunokis resided in Waikīkī for thirty-four years. For the past five years, they've viewed Waikīkī from their hilltop home in St. Louis Heights.

Tape No. 13-88-1-86

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Helen Kusunoki (HK)

May 16, 1986

St. Louis Heights, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Helen Kusunoki at her home in St. Louis Heights, Honolulu, O'ahu on May 16, 1986. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay. I'm going to start the interview now. And the first question I have for you is, what was your mother's full name?

HK: My mother's full name was Hisako Fujika.

MK: And about what age did she come to Hawai'i?

HK: She came to Hawai'i [at] about seventeen [years of age]. Sixteen or seventeen.

MK: Where did she come from?

HK: She came from Hiroshima. Hiroshima-ken.

MK: Can you tell me why she came to Hawai'i?

HK: I'm sure she was a picture bride, too. I guess she wanted to come because some of her other people from Hiroshima came to Hawai'i, too.

MK: I don't know how much you can tell me, but based on what you heard from your mother, what do you know about your mother and her family background in Japan?

HK: Well, my mother, I don't know too much about what she did in Japan. But she was adopted by her aunt, that's the Fujikas. I guess she helped them for a while. I met them also when I went to Japan. I don't think she had lived too long with them because she came to Hawai'i. Actually, she, being the eldest in the family, and she had a brother and a younger sister. So my aunt and my uncle are still living in Hiroshima now. And I had met them, also, and her natural parents (my grandparents). Her natural parents--actually, her name was Yokoyama. And so, she was adopted by her aunt and

uncle, the Fujikas. They didn't have any children, so she carried on that name. (It was a custom in Japan to have someone carry on their family name in those days.)

MK: What was your father's full name?

HK: My father's full name was Sakazo Tahara. But because he married my mother to carry on the Fujikas' name, he took Fujika (as a yoshi as they say in Japan). So his name was Sakazo Fujika. You know, it's kind of confusing because my mother had her natural name, Yokoyama, (then her adopted name,) Fujika (chuckles), instead of Tahara. But people called my father "Tahara" all the time. I guess it's easier, ne? Tahara. I mean, you don't hear of too many Fujikas. I think in Hawai'i, we were the only Fujikas.

MK: It is an unusual name.

HK: (Yes, an) unusual name.

MK: About when did your father come to Hawai'i?

HK: Oh, I think my father came to Hawai'i about 1910--1909 or 1910.

MK: From what ken did he come from?

HK: He's also from Hiroshima. He's not too far from my mother's village. Although, I don't think they knew each other. (Chuckles)

MK: Would you know the names of your parents' villages?

HK: (Yes,) my mother's village is Jinseki-gun, Fukunaga-mura. And my father is Tabusa-mura. And I think it's also in Jinseki-gun, Tabusa-mura.

MK: Why did your father come to Hawai'i?

HK: Oh, I guess because at that time---I mean, before he came, there was quite a few who came here from Hiroshima and Yamaguchi. So he must have heard about it and wanted to try. To come here to work and make a living, ne?

MK: What do you know about your father's family and background and history in Japan?

HK: Well, my father's family, I don't know too much because his parents died after he came here. Not too long after he came here. I think he had two sisters and couple of brothers. He was younger--they were all older than my father. So, most of them were gone by the time we were old enough to hear about his brothers and sisters. When I went to Japan, the only people that I met on my father's side, ne, were his nieces. There was one nephew, but I wasn't able to meet him.

MK: Did your father ever talk about what kind of training or education he had in Japan?

HK: No. I'm sure my mother and my father both went to school, but in the elementary[-school] level.

MK: When your father first came to Hawai'i, what kind of work was he doing?

HK: Well, he came on a contract [to work on a plantation], you see. His contract was to work in Kohala on Hawai'i. I don't know how many years the contract was, but after the contract ended, then he came to Honolulu and went to work at the hotel, ne. So, I'm sure there were some people working at the hotel already. And so, that's how he must have (chuckles) gone to work (at a hotel).

MK: What hotel did he work at?

HK: Moana Hotel.

MK: Tell me about the kind of work he did at Moana Hotel.

HK: Well, the thing I remember, he used to talk about being a waiter. Wait on people, ne. And so, I remember, there was a picture of him with white pants, and white shirt, and the bow tie, you know. There was a group picture, also--all these Japanese waiters. I know he mentioned who they were, but I can't remember where he put the pictures, ne.

MK: Would you remember any of the names of the men he pointed out in that group picture?

HK: I think he mentioned Sato Clothier, Mr. Sato. And who else? There were a couple of other people who he mentioned and they were quite successful. Mr. Sato opened that clothing store, ne? So he [HK's father] always laughed and says (chuckles) he was the most unsuccessful one in the group.

(Laughter)

MK: Oh, really? Oh, that's interesting, yeah?

HK: I guess, he said they didn't have too much socials, although they used to get together. Once in a while, they (would) get together at a certain man's (home). My father loved his sake, so they used to enjoy having sake and talk stories. And then, he says they used to come home late at night. Of course, this is mostly on weekends. So he said they were the rascal ones. And I remember, when I was a little older, I think I must have been about seven (or) eight years old, my mother took us. . . . That was, no, I could have been younger. I remember my older brother, myself, and my younger brother. One night, my mother took us and she went looking (chuckles) for my father because she was quite upset, ne?

MK: Did your father ever talk about the work or the tourists that he served at the Moana Hotel?

HK: Oh, the people (at the hotel)?

MK: Mm hmm [Yes].

HK: Well, I guess those days, most of the people who came here were well-to-do people. It's not like now that people can afford to come (with groups). Most of the time, it was the well-to-do who came to stay at the Moana because those days they didn't have any other hotels. Because Royal Hawaiian Hotel was built a little later. So, Moana was THE hotel.

MK: I've heard from other people that your father also worked for the Holt family. What do you know about that?

HK: Oh, that's "Rusty" Holt's family. Well, I think he worked for the Holt family while he was working as a waiter, (doing part-time work). I know he told me that he used to take care of "Rusty" Holt, and he had sisters. I don't remember if he had another brother. He also had a picture of "Rusty" Holt, my father, and I don't know if that was my older brother (with them). But I vaguely remember that there was a picture of my father with a little Haole boy, so that must have been "Rusty" Holt. And he had (the) white pants, and white shirt, with the bow tie, so I took it for granted that he must have been doing that part-time. Baby-sitting. They were a nice family, so they took him as part of the family. They used to come to the restaurant to see my father and my mother--his sisters (did). There was---oh, I don't remember his aunt now, "Rusty"'s auntie, (too). And there was another relative of "Rusty" that used to come and talk to them. His sister was a registrar at the Board of Health, (in the) marriage license department--Leila Rankin. She was one of "Rusty"'s sisters, too.

MK: I've been told that the Holts had property nearby.

HK: On the corner of Paoakalani [Street] and Kalākaua [Avenue]. It was a big home then. Well, when the Mossmans came there, I think that was the same home that the Holts had built, ne? It was a real big home. Could be on a half-an-acre property.

MK: So was quite big, then.

HK: It was [big] because Mossmans built apartments. It was one-story apartments, but they built about two (separate buildings). I don't know how many units there were. I think about six or eight units, (in each building). And then, the home, you know. So it was pretty big. The Ibaraki Store was right on the corner of that, across from that (apartments) on Paoakalani [Street] and Kalākaua [Avenue]. This was (way) after they plugged up the stream that was there, ne? And then, the Kapi'olani Cleaners. That was the Yasumatsus' clothes cleaners. And then, there was a small little

shop this Japanese man had. He used to frame pictures and sell some little frames and things. Mr. Sumi. He was a short man. But he wasn't there too long. But I remember he was there, right in between Ibaraki or next to Kapi'olani Cleaners. And then, chee, I forgot what it (was). But a Chinese laundry was (there) before. (They rebuilt the stores.) Yasumatsus were there, too, but there was the Chinese laundry, and the taxi stand, and then the stream, and my father had the ice-cream parlor next to that stream. Then Ibaraki's and so on. And there was a barbershop. Oh, next to my father's ice-cream parlor was Mrs. Kobara's barbershop. And then. . . . At that time, Ibaraki's was--that's right--Ibaraki's was next to that barbershop. Aoki's was on this side, on Paoakalani [Street] and Kalakaua [Avenue]. And then, they bought out that Okasako Store at the corner of 'Ohua and Kalakaua [Avenues]. Then they rebuilt all that section, you see. They plugged up that stream and they rebuilt.

MK: Oh, that's what that area used to look like?

HK: Mm hmm [Yes].

MK: You mentioned your father's ice-cream parlor. Can you tell me the name of that original ice-cream parlor?

HK: I remember it was Diamond Ice Cream Parlor. I don't know if he had another name before that, but I only remember the Diamond Ice Cream Parlor when he had a little counter, and he had showcases with candies. And a small little showcase in the front, he had some cigars and cigarettes and some candies. He had, I think, one or two tables, small table, where people can sit and have ice cream and maybe some sandwiches, something light. But that was after they plugged that stream. So, it was an empty space there. They didn't have any building there yet, when he had that Diamond Ice Cream Parlor. Because I still remember there was a nice bougainvillea bush (chuckles) right by the window. And sometimes (chuckles) (when we were young and didn't like the ice cream we) would throw our ice cream (and) Popsicle sticks. Instead of going to the rubbish box, we used to (laughs) throw it out of the window. My father would go outside and see a whole bunch of rubbish out there. (He would get so mad. He knew we did it.)

In fact, I think, on Halloween, I remember this. Who was it? Anyway, we all used to get together and get some rotten tomatoes and things from (chuckles) Aoki's and Ibaraki's. And then, we used to (throw)--from underneath that (space). . . . You see, it's slightly lower than the street. So we would throw when a car is passing by.

(Laughter)

HK: We used to have fun. Little rascals, ne?

MK: Then, those days that you had that ice-cream parlor, you mentioned

that there were showcases with candies.

HK: Candies. I remember they had Baby Ruth, and Mr. Goodbar. I don't think they had Mars at that time. And they used to have those gum. Was it bubble gum? Anyway, with those pictures inside. And the Baby Ruth candy, in each box, there were one or two "free" tag in the candy. So whoever buy a candy and have that in their candy bar have another Baby Ruth candy bar (free). Even the Popsicles, they used to have one (on) the stick, a "free" (printed) on the stick. So after you eat your Popsicle, and if you have a "free" (printed) on your stick, you get another Popsicle. So (chuckles) we used to look for that. My father used to get so mad because, you know, once you unwrap it, it's hard to wrap it back because it's. . . . But we used to go and sneak and look for (the free candies). My father lost profit on it.

(Laughter)

MK: You mentioned you sold Popsicles and ice cream. What kinds of ice cream was sold?

HK: Well, those days, they had (only) chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry. That's about all they had, I think. I don't think they had too many varieties. And then, later on, I know they had orange because I liked that. And they had sherbet. Did they have cup ice cream? I think those came later.

MK: How did your father keep everything frozen, those days?

HK: See, Dairymen's will provide the (electric) box--you know, the ice-cream (freezer) box. I remember he had a little box, ice-cream box, where one section is for the Popsicles and things, and then one section is where he can put his ice cream in. So it was a little box. (Double compartment.)

MK: You mentioned that your father used to also serve sandwiches.

HK: Light sandwiches, plain sandwiches. Ham sandwich or cheese sandwich. Something very (simple and) light. Because sometimes people who go to the beach would come (to eat light). But that was for a while. And then, this man who was here from the Mainland, his name was Frank. I can't remember his last name, but he was a Scotch; he was a very good baker. He came to talk to my father, he was looking for some kind of work. He asked my father if he could go in partnership with my father, because my father was alone at (that) time. And so, they agreed to go into partnership. He taught my father how to bake. He baked some delicious pies. I think he also taught my father how to make chili con carne (and a few other dishes). So they had (those) on the menu and they started making, I think it (was) hamburger steak (and beef stew). They had a few plate lunches. And then, because Frank was a good baker, he used to bake some pies. So, they had pastries, pies, with ice-cream pie à la mode. He stayed for a while, then Love's

Bakery (heard about Frank and) came to ask him if he wanted to work for them. So, he went to Love's Bakery because it was a good offer for him. My father was happy to see him get ahead. (My father thought very highly of Frank, because Frank helped my father to expand the business, by serving lunch.)

The people came to eat and the lifeguards used to come to eat (too). Naturally, Hawaiian people like to eat their Hawaiian foods. I guess they (brought) their own Hawaiian (foods). So, they suggested to my father, why don't he serve Hawaiian foods? They taught him how to make laulaus and things like that. So he started out small, and (when) people found out that he (served) Hawaiian food, the demand got bigger and bigger. That's how he got into the Hawaiian food (restaurant) and he changed the name to Unique Lunch Room instead of ice-cream parlor. Because, actually, he was serving more lunches. And that's how it was.

MK: What was included in his menu, those days, when it became a lunchroom?

HK: Oh, he had laulau, pipi kaula, lomi salmon. He started out with a few and later on, he added lomi aku, (etc.). And he had butterfish, salted butterfish. He boiled it, and he would put some round onion, and rock salt on the side, and some chili pepper water. He also had tripe, tripe stew.

MK: How did he learn to make tripe stew?

HK: Oh, I'm sure he must have learned that from either Frank or somebody who came and mentioned about it. But (he says) he used to watch. . . . Of course, he didn't serve American food, but he said he watched when he was (a waiter) at Moana Hotel. You know, he goes in the kitchen and see how they prepare American food. So, once in a while, he would fry steak (and) make things. American-style cooking for the family (and sometimes for the lifeguards, when they brought their own steaks).

MK: When I've talked to people about the Unique Lunch Room, they always mention the 'ono pipi kaula. Can you tell me how he started and how he . . .

HK: Well, you know, (the) pipi kaula, the Hawaiian boys taught him how to make pipi kaula the Hawaiian way, which is, you salt it with rock salt and dry it. He used to do that in the beginning, which was good. But the demand was so much, he didn't have time to dry it. So, (chuckles) what he did was, make (it) Japanese-style. (He would) cut (the meat) smaller and put o-shoyu and Hawaiian salt, just a little bit of sugar, and garlic. He would mix that up in a big container, (big pan). He would soak that, and then fry it because he (didn't) have time to dry it. People said, oh, it was good, so he kept at it and did it that (way). . . . (Chuckles) So that was partly Japanese-style pipi kaula. But people didn't mind. Because it has that shoyu no aji, ne (shōyu flavor)? And they

liked it. Even the Haole people liked it, (chuckles) you know. So, he (thought) well, if people like it, he'll just stick to that. Because he had no time (to dry it). (He didn't want to) serve half-dried beef. Because he used to broil that after he dry it, and then serve it. Slice it for them and serve it. But he couldn't keep up. Because the war [World War II] broke out, and (the) defense workers and, naturally, people who came to the beach, ne? (The restaurant got so busy every day.)

MK: So, in the old days, who were most of his customers?

HK: Oh, they were mostly local people, people who go to the beach (and lifeguards). (People who came to swim and relax on the beach would come.) Because it was a very small, very simple, informal place, people could come in their bathing suit, you know. They didn't have to change.

MK: How many tables were there in that place when it was a lunchroom?

HK: After the ice-cream parlor, he had one, two, three, about four tables and about four chairs to a table. So people used to wait outside in front of the store (when it's full). (Laughs) People waiting to get in. I mean, because they can come as is. And of course, some of them would come and say, oh, they want sandwiches or if we could fix lunch so they can take it with them and eat (at) the beach. So (my father would) put it in the paper plate--beef stew and rice, hamburger steak. And even the poi and pipi kaula, later on, he made it so they can take it (out). Because they can't wait outside for the tables.

MK: Oh, it was one of Honolulu's early plate lunch places?

HK: That's right, that's right.

(Laughter)

MK: Those days, how much was the food, if you went there and ordered something?

HK: Oh, those days, the poi was ten cents a bowl or fifteen cents a bowl. And pipi kaula was about fifteen cents or twenty cents a dish. The lomi salmon was about twenty cents a dish. So, it was really--well, he didn't want to charge too much. My father and my mother figured that because people who come to the beach want to eat something simple and nothing expensive, and because, naturally, the place is very simple and nothing fancy, people can come and eat and enjoy their lunch or whatever. And besides (that) he had sodas (too). And ice-cream soda, or float, or whatever they want. And coffee and tea.

MK: You know, with a menu that was kind of large, he had variety and had sodas and ice cream . . .

HK: That's right. Nothing fancy. But, you know, if you don't like poi, he had rice. You can have stew and rice, or hamburger steak, and tripe and rice. In fact, some people ate laulau and rice, pipi kaula and rice. Because even the Haole (Caucasian) people, they were a few who would come and they would order pipi kaula and rice. Then they would put o-shoyu on the rice or ketchup on the rice. Interesting.

There was one customer. (I remember.) He would always come and ask for a plate of rice, butter--small cube of butter, and milk--a glass of milk. I mean, the rice is not in a plate. It's in a bowl. He said that's his cereal. So, well, he would like hot rice because he want the butter to melt. And then, he poured the milk. And he would sprinkle a little salt. A middle-aged man, and he used to enjoy that. (He was always neatly dressed, too.)

MK: Gee, that's Haole-style, yeah?

HK: I guess, ne? Or British-style, or something like that. And then, there were a few who would pick up laulaus. They would ask for laulau every weekend. A nice gentleman in suit. I think he lived in Kāhala somewhere, and he always stop by on weekends. The store is crowded because this is about 12:30. There's some people waiting outside, so he would come by the door and he would make (HK gestures) (with his fingers). That means six laulaus. So we would put it in a package for him to take home.

MK: With all the Hawaiian foods that your dad was preparing that required a lot of time, how did he manage to make all this food?

HK: Well, he used to make it in the back (of the kitchen). My mother and my father used to prepare most of this. Of course, they had couple of hired people, and they would help. But it's all made right there in the (back of the) store, (outside) the kitchen.

MK: So, your mom was also involved in . . .

HK: Mm hmm [Yes], she helped, uh huh. They both worked together.

MK: Who waited on the tables?

HK: Well, (we) sisters. We all (chuckles), in shifts, we helped. And of course, later on, they hired couple of women to help. So it was a family business. My brothers helped, also.

MK: What were the hours like for the family?

HK: Oh, it was long hours. Before the war, they had it open at night. On weekdays, well, they closed earlier, maybe about eight o'clock. On weekends, they closed later because they have people who go to the movies, (at) Waikīki Theater. Or even from town, they would come out Waikiki way and they would stop by. And then, they started serving saimin at night because people asked for (chuckles)

saimin. So, Saturdays, I think, we used to close about eleven (or) twelve o'clock. It would be endless because people would (keep coming). It was seven days a week, you see. No time to close. So we used to take turns to go to shows (on) Saturday nights, my sisters and I, and even my brothers. So, that's the way it was. But it was lot of hard work, and yet, on the other hand, I guess that was the way (it was), so we didn't mind. (To see our parents working hard, we felt we should do our share, too.)

MK: How was the competition in the early days?

HK: There weren't too much competition. That's why, I guess, my father (didn't want to expand any more). He felt that it was enough. As long as he made enough to make a living to provide (for) the family and live a comfortable life. But they didn't have any intention of making so much money so that they can maybe buy properties, you know, put in investments and all that. They just wanted enough to have a place of their own to provide the children until such time that we were on our own, too. They were able to go to Japan a few times to visit their relatives and enjoy themselves.

MK: Some of the people have told me, oh, that Unique Lunch Room, it was so good that they used to wonder how come your father never expanded?

HK: Many times people asked (us). They asked him, (too). But they didn't want to. We could have expanded because they were doing really well (then) because there were no other Hawaiian food in Waikiki. But they said it would be too much work, too much responsibility. And they didn't want us, the children, to be working, (the way they did). So, they felt that this way, we had enough to do, and enough to keep the family going, and enough to be comfortable.

MK: Oh, that's why?

HK: Mm hmm [Yes]. Oh, so many people say, "Oh, Tahara-san, why don't you make one Downtown," you know, but no. Thank goodness, they didn't. That would be too hard for them.

MK: Then, in the early days, I know there weren't any other Hawaiian food restaurants in Waikiki, but were there other nearby restaurants?

HK: No. In town, there was a People's Cafe. Uh huh, right below Fort Street. That was another very popular place, Hawaiian food. But you see, there was no other Hawaiian food in Waikiki, close by. So, there was no competition. . . . And the customers, most of the customers are the very faithful people who came all the time. So they all come into the kitchen, say hello to my parents. And (chuckles) they know him by (his) name, too, Tahara-san, and (it) was a very friendly (atmosphere), like a family, which was real nice.

MK: I was wondering, how was your father as a businessman? Sometimes, I hear of stories where they had problems getting people to pay or whatever. How was your father in that respect?

HK: Oh, you mean, financial things?

MK: Yeah.

HK: My father wasn't too (business-minded). He was a very, I guess, happy-go-lucky type. So, my mother was more concerned about financial things. So, she did most of that. Of course, my father was, too, but he wasn't the type that would be too concerned about things. Of course, at the early stage when they started business, naturally, they struggled because they had to make sure that they won't go into debts. Although they did borrow some. I know they did because they did mention the fact to us. But they were able to pay as they went along. So, I guess that's why they weren't in debt later on.

MK: I know that some of the grocery stores had a system where people could charge. How about at the restaurant? Could neighborhood people come charge?

HK: Oh, yes. The beach boys. You know, the beach boys (and) the Stonewall boys, they used to come and have lunch, or they used to come and eat. My father knew most of them and they were all working right there, so they would come. Sometimes, they would bring their own food and maybe buy poi and whatever, or buy meat, steak, or pork chop, and bring it (chuckles) in and my father would cook for them. Naturally, sometimes, they would overspend, so they didn't have enough to pay. So, they would ask my father if they can charge, and my father would let them charge. But they would always come and pay what they owe. So (chuckles), that's the way it was. I mean, you know, those days, everybody trusted everybody else. They were all good people.

Even the Stonewall Gang boys. They played music on the stone wall and entertained themselves, entertain the people who's passing by. When they get hungry, they used to go down to Aoki Store or Ibaraki Store, buy bread, and buy can goods, and they used to have a party--their own party (chuckles) down the beach. Real nice bunch of people, you know. There was a "Steppy" DeRego, and there was a Hawaiian fellow named "Skinny" [Ewaliko]. Oh, they all had nicknames. There were about five or six of them.

MK: They were always out there?

HK: They were always (there) I guess in those days, because they didn't have too many activities; they would get together on the stone wall. "Steppy" would bring his guitar. And so, they would all sing in harmony. Tourists used to pass by and they used to stop and listen. Even we would go out of the store to listen to them because they really made good music. Nice music and nice bunch of

men. I don't know where they all went to now, but I guess a few of them passed away. They weren't troublemakers, but sometimes, there were some outsiders who would come and cause trouble.

MK: What kind of trouble was there . . .

HK: Well, they would call them names. You know, you find a few who would. But they used to ignore them. But if they kept on harassing, naturally, they would get upset, so they used to get after them. But other than that, we had no trouble.

MK: I was wondering, at the time of the depression, how did your father's business do?

HK: Oh, they were having a hard time. I remember, they did. That's one time they really tried to keep their business and tried to make it so they can support the family, keep the family going. But somehow, they pulled through. But I remember, they did have a hard time. Because a few times, they would ask me to go to Aoki or Ibaraki Store to buy certain things for the day for the store. And so, I used to do that. You know, get couple of loaves of bread or maybe buy so many pounds of hamburger and buy a few, maybe, lettuce for the sandwiches and things. That's how they (managed) because they didn't want to charge or buy too much at a time and not be able to pay. So, I know it was kind of rough for a while.

MK: About when did they build the new building? I know there was an old building, and then there was a new one built.

HK: That was built, I think--about 1934 or '35, I'm sure. Because I left in '33, and (it) was still the old store. So when I came back in '39, it was the new store. But they wrote to me about it, so it was about '34 or '35.

MK: While they were building up the new building, how did your parents manage?

HK: They rented a cottage. When they had the old store, we lived in a cottage, a rental cottage, on Cartwright Road. So they were still living there. Then when they rebuilt, they had living quarters downstairs of the store.

MK: Then when they were in the process of building the new building, what happened to the business? Just closed for the time being while they were . . .

HK: Chee, I don't remember that. Wait a minute, now. How was it? I'm sure, somehow, they were running it.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HK: Now that you ask me, oh, I must ask my sisters because they never mentioned (it) to me. I was gone, you see. But they had never mentioned to me about how things were going. They said everything was fine, don't worry, and things like that. Because being young, I have never questioned them. But now that you mention this, I must find out how they (chuckles) managed. I never realized. That's right. But I guess, somehow, they must have kept going, because otherwise, how would they be able to send me my (chuckles) school tuition?

MK: For the building of that new place, how did all the stores manage to do that?

HK: Well, Mr. Harakawa leased part of that, and the other side, the Aokis, that's their property. But the stores from the Harakawa's cleaners, right on down to. . . . I don't know which--I think he had about three or four (shops rented). That was under the Lili'uokalani Trust that Mr. Harakawa had leased. And then, on the other side, the Ibarakis, he had a lease (also). But Aokis, that was their own because they had bought out that property from the Akanas. It was under the lease. So, actually, my parents had rented it from the Harakawas, that portion of the store. There was another--a beauty shop, and there was this Mr. Fukumoto who had a little curio store. That's right.

MK: When the new building went up, how did the inside of your father's restaurant change?

HK: It was a little bigger. Not much different, but just slightly bigger than the old store. And of course, the kitchen (was) bigger, too.

MK: How about the front part? About the same number of tables?

HK: The front part, (section, had a few) more tables. He had, I think, two more extra tables. I think he had five regular tables and one small for two people right by the kitchen door.

MK: With the new building and all, did he have any new modern things put into the restaurant?

HK: Oh, yes. Of course, the counter was modern (and bigger,) too. He had a nice, big mirror. (Chuckles) And of course, appliances were more up-to-date.

MK: So, it looked very different, then, from the . . .

HK: Oh, yes, it did. It sure did, uh huh.

MK: You were mentioning something about the defense workers. When were the defense workers coming into the shop . . .

HK: Oh, yes. I think the defense workers came from about early 1940s. Because a lot of them moved in the Waikīkī area. They were living around Waikīkī. So, they used to come by for (their meals). Well, they had shifts, so the ones who would start late would come for lunch or maybe late breakfast. And then, they would buy maybe lunch to take with them or dinner or whatever. They asked for sandwiches and things. So, they used to come for breakfast, especially on weekends. (They gave the restaurant good business.)

MK: How did World War II affect the lunchroom?

HK: Well, they were busy, as usual. See, the Mossmans' [Lalani Hawaiian Village] moved out. So, that place became a military (post for recreation). I don't know what you call it at the time. It was a place for the military people to come and change to go to the beach. They leased that place from the Mossmans, I think. And so, lot of servicemen used to come by truckload so they can go down the beach. Of course, (they) used to come to eat, too. But because the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and we, being Japanese, a few customers--seeing us, (being Japanese,) they got pretty mad, so they call us names. It wasn't too pleasant. And then, sometimes the military, the soldiers would come in. Naturally, they would call us names (too). Or they would have a cold drink or something (and) they refuse to pay. So they had the MPs [military police] patrolling around. We would call them and have them come and take care of the soldier. As much as we hated to, ne? But, you know, we don't want to cause any trouble because, after all, they are soldiers. They're doing their duty for the country. But that doesn't mean they can go ahead and call people names or harass us.

But other than that, most of the soldiers there were real nice people. Because they used to come, and (they would) come in and talk to my parents. I remember there was an Italian soldier. One day, he asked my parents, he says, "Oh, someday when you're not too busy, can I come and prepare the real Italian spaghetti?"

So, my father say, "Oh, that would be nice. Sure, you come." He says come and use the kitchen because he's not busy (after lunch) and he won't be using the stove.

So, he (would) come with all the ingredients. He fixed a nice Italian dinner for the family and, of course, for the soldiers that. . . . On duty. They have soldiers who are on duty to take care (of) that place. They have shifts. So, when he got off his shift, he came to prepare that so that the boys who were going on the shift and those who were going off with him were also able to have enjoyed that spaghetti dinner. And that was really good.

MK: Oh, (chuckles) that's a nice memory.

HK: It was. And then, naturally, my parents felt that after all, they were able to come to Hawai'i and make a living. So, they used to

invite a few of the military people up here on weekends or on New Year's and Christmas. Because they're away from home, and so they felt that it would be nice for them. So, I remember they used to (invite them). A few of them remembered. They used to write and ask about my parents. So, it was really nice. And I think, too, that these (were) the things that we learn from our parents. (To respect others.)

MK: I was wondering, your mother and father are both isseis from Japan.

HK: Yes, uh huh.

MK: But from what I've heard about them and from what you're telling me, they were able to really make friends and communicate really well with all types of people . . .

HK: Yes, with their broken English and their (chuckles) (pidgin) Hawaiian language. That's the thing. My father would speak with pidgin and Hawaiian. So, I guess, they communicate all right, somehow. And the beach boys used to like that. You know, they (would) come in the kitchen, (and) "Hi, Tahara-san." And so, he would--well, they had their nicknames, too, so he would call them by their nicknames. And Duke Kahanamoku and his family, most of his brothers, used to come, too, because, (they liked their) Hawaiian food, so they (would) come. They were all nice, too.

MK: One more question about the war period. You know, it being war and everything, were there any problems in getting the supplies?

HK: Yes, they did. They weren't able to get too much meat. So, whoever they ordered the meat from, they would come and say, "Oh, we're going to be short on meat. So, whatever we have, if you want us to keep you some, we'll save you some." So my parents would deposit on that so that they'll be sure to get their meat. Because to make the pipi kaula, they have to have their chuck steak (or other meat,) enough to keep the (business) going. But once in a while, the ship doesn't come in on time. . . . Because, those days, they didn't bring in on the plane too much. Most of it (came by) ship. So, the (salesman will say) they have lots of lamb, lamb chops or enough lambs to make lamb stew. So, they started serving lamb chops and lamb stews. That's how I (have) learned to eat lamb chop and lamb stew. My father made curry stews--lamb curry stew. Well, they had to do something to accommodate the customers (and to keep the business going).

MK: Your father was pretty creative, then. He was willing to try all kinds of . . .

HK: That's right, yes. He likes to try. He liked to try (different dishes). He says, "Well, as long as there's something to eat." And I think I remember one time, I don't know if he served the customers, but he made corned beef hash. Because he had it in a big pan, I think he served that, too, (when) he ran

out of certain things.

MK: As we move on in the years, from about 1945 to 1959, were there any big changes at the restaurant?

HK: Yes. Because about that time already, I wasn't there all the time. My brother (was) there helping. And my parents were slowly cutting their hours. I guess, well, since my brother (and his wife) were slowly helping, and my sisters were helping, too. Well, as far as the food, they had most of the same things. But the funny thing is, my dad (had) learned how to bake from Frank. So, he kept on baking his own pies and serving them. I forgot to mention, but on Thanksgiving Day, (every year) he used to have pumpkin pie orders, you know, for Thanksgiving. So, we used to take the orders. So, on Thanksgiving Day, although it's open, we (did not) serve food because he's too busy baking pumpkin pies. And he also had few orders to roast turkeys. Maybe people came in for ice cream or maybe light sandwich, but other than that, we were too busy helping my father bake his pumpkin pie. Mixing all that pumpkin, the ingredients. He (had) hundreds of pie orders (then).

MK: Gee, you could have been a bakery almost.

(Laughter)

HK: Yes. People (liked) his pastry. Because he learned from Frank, he baked good pies. The sad thing is, we never learned to bake the way he did.

MK: None of the sisters or brothers?

HK: My younger sister did, but somehow, it's not like what my father used to. He baked good pies. He really did, because people came from all over to order or come to buy his pie. His custard and pumpkin, and his banana and coconut pies.

MK: I think a lot of the people I talk to, when they first hear the name Tahara's or Unique Lunch Room, they mention the pipi kaula first, and then the second, they'd say the banana pie and coconut pie.

HK: Yes. And then, there's this Mr. Farden. This famous Farden family. This Mr. Farden came every week to have lunch on Saturdays. After his lunch, he always took his pumpkin pie. Nothing else, always his pumpkin pie. So I always knew that after he's finished his lunch, he wants his pie. Well, one year when my father and mother went to visit Japan, my brother and his wife took over and they were preparing everything. I went just to help for a while. Well, my father had asked this other lady to bake the pies because she was able to do lot of baking. She did baking at home. So my father said, "Well, you take care the pies." My father made enough dough so she can use for the pie until he comes back. So, they keep it in the refrigerator. And so, after he left, my

brother's wife said, "No. I'll do it, so you help make the other things--laulau and lomi salmon--and other things. I'll take care the pie." And so, she did. Well, when Mr. Farden came for lunch, I waited on him. As usual, he had his Hawaiian food, and he said he was ready for his pie. So, I went in the kitchen, and it was nice and warm. We always give him the fresh pie. Of course, my father always baked fresh every day. So there wasn't enough left for the next day or anything. It's always day pie, that fresh day pie. And so, I went in the kitchen, I got the pie, and I served him the pie. He took one bite and he called me. I didn't realize what it was.

And he said, "Where's your father?"

I thought, "Oh, my goodness. How did he know?" So I said, "Oh, (yes,) they went to Japan. They'll be back in about a week."

He said, "I know this is not the pie your father baked." He said, "You try and taste it."

Do you know, my sister-in-law forgot to put the sugar (in the pie)? Oh, my goodness, I felt so bad. So I went in (and) told my sister-in-law about it.

So, I apologized. I said, "But the crust is my father's crust." So I said, "We'll be sure that we won't make a mistake next time."

He (asked), "When is your dad coming back?"

I said, "Oh, they'll be back (on a) certain (day). . . ." He didn't come until my father came back. I don't blame him, you know. That's the way it was. (We loved to eat my father's pies, too.)

Yes, his crust was really good. Everybody say they liked his crust, too, because it's exactly the way Frank had taught my father, real nice and flaky crust. But I tried making pies (too). When my children were young, I tried. They said, "Oh, Mom, this is just like tire." You know, the (chuckles) crust. "(It's) rubbery," they said. (I never baked another pie after that.)

MK: Oh, they were used to their grandfather's pies.

HK: So, Eric [HK's son] always say he misses my father's pie.

MK: Oh, that's special. Everybody remembers it. Now, I was wondering, after statehood came in '59 and more tourists started coming into the Islands, how did that affect the restaurant?

HK: Oh, it didn't affect at all. I mean, (the tourist came), too. The local people bring their friends and the beach boys would bring the tourists. Lots of tourists came to try the poi and Hawaiian food. We explain to them. Some tourists would come and say, "Oh, we heard that you serve Hawaiian food," and they want to try (some). So

they (would ask,) "What would you recommend?"

Well, we feel that lomilomi salmon, most of the (Caucasian) people love that. Pipi kaula, some of them would, but we thought maybe they would like to try. And poi, we don't think they would like it. So we just bring sample in a small dish and they try it. Some people, very few people, would like it. But most of them would say it's just like wallpaper paste. (Chuckles) You know, because it has that (sticky texture). But the pipi kaula, a lot of the tourists liked it. And lomi salmon, too, they like it. Lot of people from the Kahala (area), after a party, the next morning, would come. They said that it's very good for hangovers, and they would order lomi salmon. (We loved the lomi salmon, too.)

MK: Oh, (chuckles) I never heard of that.

HK: I (didn't know) that too, but they say it's good for hangover. So they said they want lomi salmon for breakfast. (Laughs) I guess that's not too bad because it has tomatoes and onion, and the salt salmon. So, they liked it.

MK: Oh, so you had Haoles, you had local people, and you had tourists coming in. In the later years, how much of the work did your father and mother actually do, say, after '59?

HK: Not too much. They slowly (retired) because my brother and his wife, and then, of course, the hired people and my sister helped. So, they would go (to) the store and do a few things (for a few hours). But in 1960, or '62? Anyway, they retired about 1962, '63, I think, completely. They left it up to my (brother and his wife).

MK: Your brother?

HK: [Yes].

MK: And how long did your brother stay in the business?

HK: Oh, they didn't stay there too long, too. I think they stayed there about ten years. Because the hotels were coming up, and so people say, "Why don't you folks open someplace in Kapahulu?" But they didn't want (to) either. And so, people asked us, too. When they saw us in the shopping area, they say, "Why don't you folks start a restaurant, you sisters?" But I don't (want to). I guess we had enough. It's a good business, but it's a tiring business. Lot of responsibility and lot of work because you're on your feet all day. And now that they have so many restaurants. There is a (good) restaurant in Kapahulu, (a) Hawaiian food shop. It's very good, too, there. We tried (it) several times.

MK: Oh, so because it involved a lot of work and responsibility, the sisters decided.

HK: And then, you have to have a good location, ne? Someplace where (there's enough parking). So, that's another thing, too. I think, right now, they have quite a few Hawaiian food shops in town, Kapahulu area, and in Ala Moana there's that Poi Bowl. They all seem to be pretty good.

MK: So, that's why. Because people always ask, "How come the Tahara children didn't keep it up?"

HK: I know. Well, my brother was on the Mainland. So when my parents wanted to retire, they asked us if we wanted to take over the business but we didn't want to. So, they asked my brother, so he came back and they took over.

MK: Now, I'm going to go back a little bit. I was wondering, before the new building came up, who were the neighboring businesses before the new building?

HK: Before the new building, it was the barbershop, and Ibaraki Store, and (the) cleaners, Harakawa's. And there was that Blue Ocean (Inn)--the restaurant, and there was a Chinese store--a little Chinese curio store, another barbershop, and then the Aokis on the other end. And on this side, towards Paoakalani [Street], there was that beauty shop, that Fukumoto's Curios, and then that Yasumatsu's cleaners, and then the Ibaraki Store.

MK: Do you have any special memories about that place before they built the new building? Like last time, you were telling me about the Chinese laundry men.

HK: Oh, yes. I think that was one of the most (memorable times) for us. When we were young, we used to wait for the Chinese people to deliver the laundry because we want to get into that wagon (and) go for a ride. You don't see too many horse and buggy around Waikīkī, especially. That was a thrill for us. So we used to wait for them. Sometimes, they were having lunch. We used to go and ask them, and, oh, they get so annoyed. So we (would) wait for them. When we see them loading the buggy, we say, "Oh, they're going." But (in) those days, they didn't have those laws. So we (would) all climb in and (chuckles) go on that horse and buggy (for a ride). That was real fun for us.

MK: Where did the horse and buggy go delivery?

HK: Oh, they used to go down in the back of Waikīkī. You know, a few down (the Ala Wai,) and a few down the other side towards Kapahulu. But after they closed that place, after they rebuilt that place, I don't know. I think they moved to Kapahulu someplace. I don't know where they (moved) to.

MK: What do you remember about these Chinese laundry men. Like, how many were there and . . .

HK: There were about three (men). I know there was one tall, slender man. Another was a short Chinese man. In fact, both of them were short, the two. We never saw their wives. I think they were all bachelors.

MK: Did they live in the area, too, the Chinese laundry men?

HK: Yes, I think they lived in the back of the store or further down someplace. I think they lived in the back of that shop for a while, anyway.

MK: From some other people, they told me that they used to see them smoking opium. Did you see that?

HK: I think (so). But, you know, when you're (young), you don't know about those things. But it was a strong smell. They always smoked that long pipe. So, I remember, we used to say, "Ho, stink, stink."

(Laughter)

HK: The Chinese laundry men used to get mad because we used to go in the shop and say, "Oh, you smoking stink tobacco."

And then, when they cook their food, oh, the smell (aroma). You know, Chinese food, smell so good. They used to do their own cooking.

MK: Did your father ever do Chinese cooking?

HK: Well, he wasn't too much into Chinese cooking, but I remember he used to take us to the Wo Fat Restaurant (in town). And there was a Lau Yee Chai [Restaurant] in Waikīkī and on occasion--my mother didn't care, so she never went, but my father used to take us. Well, he enjoyed Chinese food, but he didn't cook too much Chinese food himself.

MK: You just mentioned the old Lau Yee Chai. What do you remember about that place?

HK: Yes, that was way down by the--Fort DeRussy? It's Ambassador Hotel, now, I think. Yes, it was a nice, fancy restaurant.

MK: How was it decorated inside? They said that it's . . .

HK: It was Chinese-style, mostly, mm hmm. In fact, even the entrance, it was all Chinese-style. I think they had a big. . . . That entrance was a nice, Chinese-style--it wasn't a moon gate. How was it now? But I remember. And we used to say, "Oh, boy, that's a treat." I mean, you know, Lau Yee Chai. So, we used to behave. Because my father says, he's going (to) take us to the Lau Yee Chai for Chinese dinner. And Wo Fat in town.

MK: That's an old place, yeah?

HK: It's still there, ne?

MK: You talked about the Chinese laundry men. How about the other businesses? Did you go visiting about the other businesses . . .

HK: We did. We used to go to. . . . See, Ibaraki Store, way back, when we were about five, six, seven years old, Ibaraki Store was right nearby our store. They used to make ice cakes. Mr. Ibaraki used to make ice cakes to sell. We used to go over and help and watch how they make those ice cakes. That's when we lived in (the) back of the store, I think. No, we had moved. And he also had Japanese furo in the back, (of the store) so the people (in) the community would go into that furo. There was Mrs. Ichida who used to work part-time for (Mr.) Ibaraki. She used to take care (of the) bath. She had a daughter Ruth. (Mrs. Ichida was a very hardworking woman, and very neat, too.)

MK: Did the community have to pay to go into the o-furo?

HK: No, I don't (think we paid for the o-furo). But I know we all went to that o-furo. Because, usually, she would call (to tell us when to go in). Mr. Ibaraki would go in, or whoever is ready to go because she don't want everybody trying to go at the same time. The children like to go in and soak in there and stay in there, especially on a cold day. They won't come out, so she (would be) real upset. She used to come and say, "You better hurry up and get out because other people want to come in."

MK: I never heard about that. That's interesting.

HK: I forgot to mention (it), but that was another pleasant thing that we used to enjoy, especially after we came home from swimming. Oh, we used to love to go into the o-furo. She had to put wood sticks to burn (to start the o-furo). That was the old-style of furo, ne? And it's the real Japanese(-style) from Japan, that wooden o-furo. She had (a) little, stool (to sit on, and) so you can step on it to climb in and out. We were so (short), ne? (And) she had a little pail so you can scrub outside, and scoop the o-yu, and then (wash) yourself before you go in to soak yourself.

MK: Oh, sounds so good. (Laughs)

HK: Yes. Those are the things that (I remember well). It was nice. I wish we could have done that for our grandchildren to experience.

MK: Yeah. Because it's so hard, though, to get an o-furo nowadays.

HK: They have (o-furos now,) but it's plastic, I understand. Those days, (it was) all wooden. When we were on Cartwright (Road), the Nadamotos were next door, and they had o-furo in their basement. I remember, well, we had our own. Not o-furo, but (similar and

smaller). So, my mother always told us, "You don't go and meiwaku those people." But one of the (Nadamoto) sisters, she's a rascal. She used to call us. She (will say) her parents are all through (taking a bath). "You folks want to come to our o-furo? Come over now." And this is about 8:00, 8:30 at night. So we used to sneak over. (Chuckles) That was really nice (and fun). (It was fun for them.)

MK: Did you go visiting the people or the other shops along . . .

HK: We used to, (sometimes). Of course, they used to come over to order lunch or sandwich. So it was really very neighborly. (We would chat, if we weren't too busy.)

MK: After the new building came up, who were in the building?

HK: After the new building came up, well, the Aokis were on the other side (and there was a) barbershop (next to Aokis). I don't know who those people were because they were (new owners at that time). And the Maus (had a curio store). They moved out (later), I think. And then the Blue (Ocean Inn) expanded the restaurant. And Harakawa's cleaners. And a barbershop. And my parents' store. And the Fukumoto's curio (shop). There was a beauty shop, but the Cherry Blossom Dry Goods Store (moved) in (after the beauty shop closed). And (next door was) the Fukumoto's, and the Kapi'olani Cleaners, and the Ibaraki Store. There were a few changes.

MK: You know that Cherry Blossom Dry Goods Store, is that the same one that's still in Waikīkī?

HK: That's right. By Lewers [Street] and Kalākaua [Avenue]. That's the same family. They moved on the other side, (when the place was torn down for a hotel).

MK: What is that family's name?

HK: The Nakamuras. They live up (in) Mānoa. The son ran the Cherry Blossom, (Mr.) Takeshi Nakamura, his wife is Irene Nakamura. She was at the University [of Hawai'i]. A math teacher at the U.

MK: I was told that your sister, too, had a business?

HK: That's right. After the barbershop (closed) she and her husband opened a sundry store, Russell's Sundries. She had that shop for quite a while.

MK: And that would be your sister who's . . .

HK: Below (me, my younger sister).

MK: . . . Mrs. Sakamoto, yeah?

HK: That's right.

MK: Sometimes I've heard that in the old days, a lot of the merchants used to get together for get-togethers. What do you remember about gatherings of the merchants and their families? Picnics or whatever?

HK: Yes. I remember (it). I think they had picnics at the teahouse by Kālia Road.

MK: Is that Shioyu?

HK: Shioyu. Few times there. They also had (picnics at) Waikīkī, Kapi'olani Park. In fact, there was an open space, (by the store,) so we used to have gathering over there, too.

MK: What would happen at those gatherings? Games or . . .

HK: Games. It's like a family party. Of course, the young ones would get together and we would play games. And the boys would get together and have their own baseball games. In fact, we used to have (a small) bon odori and things like that just among our (neighbors).

MK: Who would organize the bon odori?

HK: Chee, those days, it was the young men. "Mahjong" (Yoshimura) and there was a Mr. Ichiyama who used to work for Ibarakis, and the Ibaraki boys, and the Aoki boys. All those young people, they used to get together and (have) the (games and shows).

MK: Then where was the bon odori, though? Where could they have it?

HK: (At) the open space behind of the Aoki residence and behind our store. You see, they (have) filled up (the) little stream. So it was all coral. That was a nice, little open space like a park where we could play baseball and games, and have a little bon odori, enough for that little community. Just for the people around that area only. I remember. (It was always a nice gathering for the young boys and girls.)

MK: I was wondering, since it was like a little community there, were there things like tanomoshis?

HK: I'm sure they did. I'm sure they did have, tanomoshi. (And) they started the Waikīkī Aloha Kai, the club, which is still in existence now.

MK: What does the Waikīkī Aloha Kai do?

HK: Well, this is more (of a community club when) they get together on Christmas, New Year's and I think they have picnics, too. But it's (also to help when) someone passes away, so they (would) let (the

members) know. To help the families. They try to keep in touch.

MK: Are you a member?

HK: No, we're not in Waikīkī. After my parents passed away, ne? My sister is. And of course, our youngest sister, she's not living in Waikīkī anymore, too. She's Florence.

MK: But they're active in it?

HK: Not in the Waikīkī Aloha Kai, because (they do not live in Waikīkī), in that area. But my sister, Lillian Sakamoto, still lives in Waikīkī, and they had the business there, too.

MK: Oh, that sister is involved. And then, I was wondering about your mother. Your mother helped at the restaurant. You mentioned that she went to Keister's Sewing School?

HK: This was way back when my father had the business with Frank, and so she was able to. Well, at that time, they started this Keister Sewing School. Because she wasn't able to learn to sew (in Japan) and she thought maybe it would be good to (know) to sew so she can sew for the family and teach. I think they were about thirty students at that time at the Keister School. I remember she had the picture of all the [students]. . . . And then, she opened a little dressmaking shop in Waikīkī, right near Fort DeRussy. She did (sewing) for a while. I think maybe couple of years. But after Frank left, she decided she would help my father in the store. And then, she taught at home (too). The neighborhood young girls, a few of them wanted to learn, so. I remember they used to come to the home and learn on weekends.

MK: You mean, she taught as a professional teacher to the neighborhood girls?

HK: (Chuckles) To us? (To a few neighborhood girls.)

MK: To you folks?

HK: We were too young to learn (at that time). So when I came back (from Japan), I learned from another lady right behind the store, because my mother was helping my father in the shop. She said it would be good to learn the fundamental of sewing. Because, when (we) get married and if you know how to sew, at least you can do your own sewing for your children, and mending, and things. So, I went for a few months to learn from a Mrs. Tanimura. She lived in the back of that place. (She had a dressmaking shop on Paoakalani Street.)

MK: Did she have many young girls coming over to learn when you . . .

HK: Yes, she had about four or five students besides myself. And I'm glad I did because at least it helps. Of course, now it's cheaper

to buy. Although it's good to learn the fundamentals. So, my daughter learned, too, when she was old enough to (learn).

MK: So, in the old days, your mother did the same thing? She used to teach to the neighborhood girls?

HK: Mm hmm [Yes]. (For a while.)

MK: Oh, that's interesting.

HK: Those days, there (were) Mr. and Mrs. Kuniyuki. He had the taxi stand by the Chinese laundry. She was very good in o-koto and Japanese culture. So, she taught a few of the Waikīkī ladies. They went to learn o-koto from Mrs. Kuniyuki. I remember my mother, and there was a Mrs. Matsushige. And Mrs. Sano, too. And some other young ladies went to learn o-koto from Mrs. Kuniyuki. Because we had an o-koto at home. And I asked my mother, and she said they all learned from Mrs. Kuni[yuki] . . . (The ladies in Waikīkī kept themselves busy, by working and learning, and it was nice. I think we were very fortunate to have had the wonderful privilege to meet all the wonderful people.)

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 13-91-2-86

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Helen Kusunoki (HK)

May 22, 1986

St. Louis Heights, O'ahu

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Helen Kusunoki at her home in St. Louis Heights, O'ahu on May 22, 1986. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, then, Mrs. Kusunoki, can you tell me when you were born?

HK: I was born on July 20, 1918 in Waikīkī.

MK: And what number are you in the family?

HK: I'm number two, the eldest of the girls. I had a brother above and a brother below, and two sisters below my brother.

MK: You know, you mentioned that you were born in Waikīkī.

HK: Yes.

MK: Where in Waikīkī?

HK: If I remember correctly, my mother said it was right near the store somewhere. So they must have had the store then--ice-cream parlor.

MK: When I talked with you on the telephone before, you mentioned that you had lived in the Kūhiō Avenue area.

HK: Yes. That was by the old Waikīkī School. I think it was the property of the Ewalikos. They had rental units. We lived there for a while, and then we moved to Cartwright Road.

MK: How long did you stay in the Cartwright Road area?

HK: Chee, I can't remember exactly how long, but I know I lived there until I left for Japan. So, that must have been quite a while.

MK: And then, after you lived in the Cartwright area, where did you folks move to?

HK: Well, they rebuilt the store. This was about 1935, I think, '35, '36. When they rebuilt the store, they built quarters downstairs. And so, the folks moved into that quarters downstairs of the store. So when I came back from Japan, that's where they were living.

MK: Why is it that you folks moved from the basement area?

HK: Well, we stayed there but that area originally was a stream--the water that came from the ocean. So whenever it's high tide, water seeped from underneath. And (chuckles) I remember we get up in the morning, and we were walking in the water. So, they had a chance to buy a property. The folks decided that the children were all grown, too, and as things were, it's better to build a (home of their own). So they bought this place. That was in 1941, in August, (we moved to the home). I remember after we moved, they used the living quarters, downstairs, for a storage place for all their groceries and things--can goods, etc. Well, I remember one day, I think it was after a heavy rain? The water was up about two feet or three feet and (chuckles) things were floating underneath. Thank goodness, nobody was living there.

MK: Really. Two feet is quite a bit.

HK: I know, it was quite a bit, ne? Because lot of things were floating. You know, they had can goods, and some tables and chairs. The fire department came to pump the water out. (And) it wasn't (just) our place. The Harakawas, (too). They didn't live there, but they had some things downstairs, too. And so, they had to pump the water out.

MK: Gee, was a massive cleanup, then.

HK: That's right.

MK: You know, it seems like you spent most of your young time in the Cartwright area.

HK: Kūhiō [Avenue] and Cartwright [Road]. But we were older, so I remember the Cartwright [Road] home. Because it was close to the park and close to the beach. And the neighborhood children, we all played together. We used to have a real good time going to the park, going swimming, getting together and climbing the mango trees. (Chuckles)

MK: What other things did you folks do as children in that Cartwright area?

HK: Oh, I know my brothers went surfing. Well, we used to get together and play dolls or sometimes one of the rascal girls next door would say, "Let's go down to the other side, 'Āinahau area." Well, they had to deliver laundry, you see. So, we would go along and look into (the rubbish cans). Because those people there would throw some good magazines and sometimes some nice shoes and things. So

(chuckles) we used to pick it up and bring it home. Put it on and enjoy that. And we used to play games. Like, you know, (the) Durham bags that men used to smoke, roll their own tobacco. The empty bags, we used to fill that with grass. I forgot what they call that game. Halloween or alavia or. . . . Anyway, what you do is fill the bag with grass and you will throw it to anybody who's running away. If that thing will hit that person, that person is out. Was it Halloween or alavia? Anyway, there was a name for it. I remember we used to play that. Because it doesn't hurt, you know. You have grass inside. Some people used to put sand or dirt, which makes it harder, so it (hurt). (I think we had partners, too.)

MK: So, in those days, when you were playing those games, in what area did you play?

HK: Well, there was an empty lot right across our home. (It wasn't) too big, but big enough for us to play. So, we used to go there and play.

MK: Those days, who were your favorite playmates?

HK: Chee, I guess we all played together well, so we didn't have any favoritism. Although there was one rascal girl, Ayako Nadamoto. She was really rascal and she was (a) lot of fun, too.

(Laughter)

MK: You mentioned that, as kids, you used to go into the 'Āinahau area. What did the 'Āinahau area look like?

HK: Those days, ne? Well, those homes weren't too big a home. Nice (homes and) clean yard. More medium-sized homes. Very neat and quiet.

MK: What kinds of people lived in the 'Āinahau area?

HK: Oh, I think they were (more) middle-aged people. Of course, we don't see too many of them outside. But (it) was very quiet, so I think (they were). . . . And of course, quite well-to-do. But we didn't see (the people) outside at that time.

MK: What did the Cartwright area look like in the old days?

HK: Well, Cartwright area was all mixed (families). I mean, there were Hawaiian families, and (the) Sasaki Camp, and there was a Portuguese family in the corner--DeRegos. "Steppy" DeRego's family. And then, the Akaka family at the corner. The Rasmussens on the other corner, towards Kapahulu Avenue. There was a Spencer family. And so, we had a mix of Japanese, and Hawaiian, Portuguese family. (There was the Wongham family also and other families, too.)

MK: What do you remember about each of these families, like the DeRego family?

HK: DeRego family, Mr. DeRego, Mrs. DeRego, and there were sisters. Oh, they were nice Portuguese family, very hard-working people. I think Mr. DeRego worked for Waikīkī School? I remember, they were both very hard-working people. Even the children, ne? They were all nice (people). And the Akakas, too.

MK: What do you remember about the Akaka family?

HK: Well, the Akaka family, I think the sisters, I remember (went) to the University [of Hawai'i]. There was a brother, Llewellyn Akaka. Very neat Hawaiian family. In fact, we met one of the sisters (a) couple of years ago at Kahala Mall, (chuckles) and we still remembered each other. It was real nice (to) talk about Waikīkī. They're all retired now.

MK: What do you remember about the Sasaki family that had the Sasaki Camp?

HK: The Sasaki family, too, the elder Mr. and Mrs. Sasaki were nice, quiet people. The children (were) all nice (and) educated, ne?

MK: What was the Sasaki Camp like?

HK: Well, I don't know how many families there were. It was like a (two-story) duplex home. There must have been about four families living there, I think. Because usually, the children will come out to play, so we very seldom go in. But other than that, usually, the children will all come out and they would get together at the open, vacant lot.

MK: Then, the house that you lived in, what did it look like?

HK: It was a tall house. It was more like a two-story home, but actually, it's not a two-story home. Oh, I remember now. That house was owned by the Kelley family. There was a Bobby Kelley, Buddy Kelley, and there was a sister. That's right, the Kelley family. So, they moved out, and we rented that home from the Kelley family. So, actually, the downstairs, we didn't live downstairs. But my brothers (and their friends) would make surfboards and used it as a working area where they can make things. So, we lived upstairs. It was pretty big--there was, I think, three bedrooms. And a big living room, dining room, kitchen and a bath. So, it's considered pretty big at that time. In fact, actually, it's three bedrooms, and there was another big extra room like a family room on the side, which my mother used as a sewing room.

MK: It's kind of a big house . . .

HK: That was a big home. (Rather old, too.)

MK: What was in the yard of your home?

HK: There was a big yard in the front. And there was a big mango tree right near the fence, (near) the road. It was common mango, I remember. When the mango season comes then the neighborhood children will come and we (chuckles) (would) climb the tree. So my brother built a platform where they can sit. You know (to) pick some mangoes, sit on the platform, and eat the mangoes right there.

(Laughter)

MK: Oh, sounds like a nice house to live in.

HK: It was. That's why I remembered that home more than the other homes.

MK: In that Cartwright area, I've been told that there were all kinds of special activities. One of them that people told me about was the hanamatsuri. What do you remember . . .

HK: That was (at the) Aoki (home). Because (the) Hongwanji (Mission) used to send teachers and have Sunday schools (outside of the main temple). They rented Aoki's porch. The Aokis had a big home with a big porch. Oh, you call that. . . . How do you say, now?

MK: Was it like a veranda?

HK: Veranda, that's right. It was a nice, roomy veranda. So the teachers used to come on Sundays and have Sunday School. And so, they had hanamatsuri there. So, we would join that. And after hanamatsuri, we would go down to 'Ōhua [Avenue]. On 'Ōhua, there was a Baptist church towards right near Ala Wai Canal. So we would join that church because when Christmas comes, they'll give Christmas candies and gifts, ne? And (chuckles) so, we used to do that.

MK: What did your parents think about all this? You know, you were going to Hongwanji, then Baptist . . .

HK: Well, our parents were so busy with their business. They knew we were going to the Hongwanji Sunday School. So, as long as we were going to church, they didn't mind. But they didn't know that we had quit and gone to that other church until we mentioned (about it). I mentioned to my mother that I needed something to wear for (the) Christmas play. She asked me what Christmas play. She wondered because Buddhist churches don't have any Christmas (plays). They don't celebrate Christmas as much as hanamatsuri. So I (had to tell) her, we all went to the [Baptist] church down the street. Oh, she was pretty upset for a while, but she (thought), since all the other children (were) going (there too,) (chuckles) she didn't want to discourage me. We went there for (a) couple of years, and then we (stopped going later on).

MK: Another thing I've heard about was Halloween. It used to be kind of a big occasion for the kids. What did you do?

HK: (Laughs) Actually, Halloween--because there wasn't (other) excitement, and being so young. So, Ayako (Nadamoto) being (a) rascal, too, we go along with her. She would go to Aoki Store and get some old tomatoes. And then, on Kalakaua Avenue, those days (there weren't) many cars. Right on the side of the store, at that time, there was a space there right between our store and the other side. . . . It (was) a taxi stand. Anyway, it (was a) low (land). The street is pretty high. Because (there) was a stream before. So we would go down there, and when a car go by, we would throw the tomato. Or if somebody is passing by, we would throw the tomato, and we'll hide underneath so they don't know where (it's) coming from. By the time they came to check, we were gone. Disappeared, because we don't want to get caught. But it wasn't a nice thing to do. But (it) was part of (Halloween). We didn't go trick-or-treating, those days. So, actually, what we (did), I guess that was fun (on) Halloween for (us).

MK: Then, someone told me that there used to be movies at St. Augustine's Church. Did you ever go and see the movies?

HK: In the yard (of the church). But, I didn't go to that too much. But they also (showed) movie in the empty space (behind) Aoki's (home). On the side of Aoki's home (and Paoakalani Street), there was a big, empty space there. I think some of the young men got together and sponsored movies. Sometimes, they had bon odori. And they used to get together and have baseball games. There was "Mahjong" [Yoshimura] and all the other young men from there, the Harakawas, and Aokis. They had something going for all the young men and for the girls, too.

MK: Quite a few activities, then.

HK: Mm hmm [Yes]. (Always something going.)

MK: How about picnics among the merchants?

HK: That's right. Picnics, too. I'm sure that was the picnic they had at Shioyu, the teahouse on Kalia Road. I (remember) I went to that picnic. (It) must have been one of the picnics sponsored by the Waikiki merchants.

MK: What did you folks do at that kind of picnic?

HK: They didn't have races and (games) because (it was not a park). We went swimming (instead). I guess they had lucky numbers (and other activities). I can't remember everything. But I remember the gathering they had at Shioyu.

MK: What did Shioyu look like, anyway? What was Shioyu?

HK: The Shioyu (was) a teahouse. At that time, it was more like a place for social gatherings. So, they had parties. Of course, on Sundays, I guess, they had picnics. I remember it was close to the beach. (It was) a two-story (building). They had some lanterns. So you can (swim) and wade. But it's not like the Waikīkī Beach.

MK: What was different?

HK: Because you know where the 'Ilikai is. It was around that area, so they didn't have the nice sand like they have down Waikīkī Beach. If I remember correctly, it was (a little) more muddy.

MK: Was there any o-furo or onsen-type thing at Shioyu?

HK: I'm sure they did have o-furo, ne? I don't know about onsen, but I think they had o-furo there.

MK: Then, another thing that I've heard about is that in your area where you lived, there used to be dance teachers that used to come to . . .

HK: Oh, yes. Mrs. Sakai. Sakai-sensei. She came from Nu'uanu, I think. I think she (went) to different areas to give lessons. She came to Waikīkī once a week on a weekend. And most of the girls, the young girls, took dance lessons. Although I wasn't too interested in odori because I would much rather (chuckles) go to the beach and swim. But because most of the girls were (learning), my mother asked me (if I wanted to) learn odori. I thought, since all my friends were going, I may as well join them, and I joined the class (too). But I think about six or seven months (later) I just wasn't interested so I gave up. The older ladies took shamisen. I remember there were quite a few ladies who took shamisen lessons from Mrs. Sakai.

And I (remember) one time, (Mrs. Sakai says) they were having a grand opening (at the Hale'iwa Theater). So for their dedication, Mrs. Sakai was asked to bring her dance group to perform. So, she asked the Waikīkī group to go with her, which I didn't want to go. But (in) this dance, she needed me to be part of it. It wasn't an important part, but it was a ceremonial dance (for such occasions). So, I went to the opening (chuckles) dedication. But I felt that I didn't want to (go to such functions) so I gave up. I learned a few nice dances. I don't think I remember them. (I wish I did continue now.)

MK: So, was your Hale'iwa Theater performance your first and last performance?

HK: That's the first and last. (Yes.)

(Laughter)

HK: I think, I must have been about twelve years old.

MK: That's a story you can tell your granddaughter later on.

HK: That's why I mentioned (it) to (my granddaughter). But I wasn't really interested in odori (at that time)--I wish I had continued. But I was more for swimming and. . . .

MK: Where was your favorite place to go swimming in Waikīkī?

HK: At the Natatorium. You know, there were about five or six of us (who) would go to the Natatorium. Every Sunday, we get together. The Aoki girl, Harakawa (girl). There was Ruth Ichida, and that Richard Sasaki's sister (Ruth), and (Mabel) Morisato--the oldest girl, myself, and the Yoshimura (sisters). Anyway, about six or seven of us would go to the Natatorium. We would go there about lunch time, and swim all day. What we (did was), put (on) our bathing suit and wear a dress over it. We tie the dress on the chain (at the Natatorium). The Natatorium has chain links around. We'll tie our dress on the chain, and we'll swim all day. The man in charge of the Natatorium knew us because we were there (almost) every (chuckles) Sunday. (Most) Sundays we would go there. Sometimes, our parents will look for us. And here we were, coming home all dripping wet. After we swam, we would come home--instead of coming down Kalākaua Avenue, we'll take the backside of (the homes by the) Public Baths. You know where the aquarium is?

MK: Right.

HK: There was a wall right down up to the corner of Kapahulu, and (Kalākaua Avenue) there were homes. I think it (was) the Steiner home (and the) or Cunha home? There were some (other) homes. And (there was) Chris Holmes' (home) where the Queen's Surf was. They had a nice wall. It was wide enough so you can walk right down and come out to Kalākaua Avenue from there. So it was nice. We would walk (through) the back, instead of coming (through Kalākaua Avenue). But those were the real good days. And I was real tan. (My mother was quite angry at me. Some people called me a "water baby.")

MK: Where did the boys go and swim?

HK: Oh, the boys used to go across the street in Waikīkī. That Waikīkī Beach right across that Aoki Store. So they always used to go there. But because, see, it's coral and when it's high tide it's rough. Whereas, the Natatorium, it's deep but it's pretty nice and calm. So we preferred going to the Natatorium at that time.

MK: How did you girls learn how to swim, those days?

HK: I guess because we lived in Waikīkī, we used to go to the beach ever since we were little children. Oh, yes, in school, Washington (Intermediate School) at that time, swimming was quite active, and all the different schools, intermediate schools and high schools. We knew how to swim a little. But when we went to

intermediate school, there was Mrs. Flint. She was a very good swimming teacher and diving coach. So, she asked us. She wanted to organize a swimming team, because they were having swimming tournaments among the different schools. (The) intermediate schools (had) their own (teams) and high school had their own (teams). So, she wanted us to train and to enter (in the tournaments). I guess that's (another) reason why we started going swimming all the time. Anyway, we (went to the Natatorium almost every) Sunday. And the swimming team (trained there with Mrs. Flint).

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

HK: My older brother and the Harakawas, (brother and sister). . . . Mitsue Harakawa and her older brother Richard. We joined this swimming group while we were in Washington Intermediate. Mrs. Flint was very happy because she had the two brothers and sisters in (her) swimming group. This was in 1931 or 1932. But (I joined) for fun. It gave us something to keep us active.

MK: Oh, that's interesting.

HK: It was really fun for us at that time. We didn't think about trying to get anything out of it. It was more for fun. Then they had a swimming meet where they had some real good swimmers from the Mainland and divers (too), quite well-known divers from the Mainland. And I remember Johnny Weismuller. He (acted) in Tarzan. He came. And Duke Kahanamoku. Of course, they were known as great swimmers at that time, so they were a special (performers). And (there were) a few good divers from the Mainland. This was supposed to be the local, statewide [territorywide], big swimming (event).

MK: Gee, how did you do in the swimming meets?

HK: I didn't come in first, but, I guess, we came in about third. I remember, at that time, we had the bronze medal. (It) was the (first) and only time. [It] was very exciting because we had never--I mean, I had never entered anything (chuckles) like that. So (it) was a big thrill. But actually, I really wanted to see all these people, too. That's why, our parents were excited (too). At that time, the Natatorium was really nice. It was a big event, (something I will always remember).

MK: What did the Natatorium look like back then?

HK: Oh, it was nice. It was very impressive to have a nice, big Natatorium like that and to be able to swim in that Natatorium. (It was a thrill.) When I came back from Japan, and I had a chance to go and see (it again) I was very disappointed because they had never kept up.

MK: Now, when we see it, it's not in too good a shape.

HK: It's a shame because it's considered a war memorial natatorium. And if they (kept) up, and (kept) that place as a memorial, it would be a very nice swimming pool. Because that pool is not fresh water. At the bottom of the pool, it's all open, so the ocean water is coming in. So, it's clean because it's changing constantly. Sometimes you just jump in and you will hit bottom. You can feel (it). In fact, they used to dive in, and swim out to the ocean underneath. Because it's open underneath the water can come in. I know some of the boys used to do that.

MK: Gee, they were good swimmers, then, yeah?

HK: They (were).

MK: Then, also, across from the Natatorium, you have Kapi'olani Park. What do you remember about Kapi'olani Park and what you used to do in that area?

HK: Well, Kapi'olani Park, by the corner of Kalākaua and Kapahulu [Avenues] where the zoo is, there was a stream. Below that Kalākaua Avenue, it (was a stream) so the ocean water can come (through). There was a stream there that came down (by) Makee Road. (There were) date trees. That's where they had the elephant's quarters. Daisy's quarters. We (would) go to the stream (and) wade in the stream to catch fishes over there--those small fish for a small little fishpond. And instead of coming down Kalākaua [Avenue], we would take the short cut from Cartwright [Road] and come right down (by) the stream. Because it's not deep, it's only ankle length. We would just cross the stream and come up to the zoo. Because we can go right around the elephant's (quarters) and come right down (to) the zoo. There were date trees, so we (would) pick (some) dates. It was real nice (and fun), very exciting.

Also, there was Mr. Matsuzawa. He had a little wagon where he sold candies and things. That was a trademark at Kapi'olani zoo, right near that Kalākaua and Kapahulu [Avenues].

MK: Oh, so you used to go to Mr. Matsuzawa's wagon and . . .

HK: Buy some candies and things he had. I remember, I think, it was partly painted red. The bottom side or. . . . Anyway, he had a little roof over it. A cute little cart.

MK: Then, I was told that there used to be polo games at Kapi'olani Park.

HK: They used to have that, too, yes, polo games. What else did they have over there? Quite a few people go picnicking, too, on the other end of Kapi'olani Park. It was (a picnic area).

MK: Did you go picnicking, too?

HK: We did a few times, too, mm hmm.

MK: Then, another area that I'm kind of interested in is, you know, the hotel area where the tourists stayed. Did you folks ever have any contact with that area of Waikīkī?

HK: We used to walk down to that side of Waikīkī, the hotel area. That's another place you can walk in the back of the hotels because it's right by the beach side. So we used to, for curiosity, we would take the back road. And of course, sometimes, come out (through) Kalākaua. But (only) once in a while.

MK: In those days, what did you think of tourists when you happen to see them?

HK: Well (in) those days, we used to think that all the rich people come to Hawai'i. Only the rich. Because when tourists are in Royal Hawaiian [Hotel], Moana, or Halekūlani, they were considered people with money. Only the rich or celebrities (Hollywood people) and. . . . (It's not like it is now) where everybody else can come. But those days, it was considered only (for) the rich people. So, we (didn't) see them walking around like the tourists do now. Everything is (by) limousine and they have their special attention.

MK: So, it's different from today, then?

HK: Oh, yes.

MK: Then, near the hotel area, there used to be employees' quarters for families like the Hikidas . . .

HK: That was across Moana Hotel. Moana Hotel had some cottages. It's connected with Moana Hotel. I think it was in the back of the cottages, there were homes for employees of Moana and Royal [Hawaiian Hotel]. (The) Hikida family, the Maeda family, Takenaka family. And I'm sure there were other families, but I remember just (a few of them).

MK: How did you get to know of the Hikidas, and Takenakas and Maedas?

HK: Oh, because we went to school together. So, that's how we (knew them).

MK: Knew each other?

HK: Uh huh [Yes].

MK: Then, changing the subject a little bit, I was wondering, since your mother and father had the store and restaurant to run, what was family life like for the Fujika family?

HK: Well, those days when they had the store and we were older, we knew our parents had to work hard. So, we all tried to help. So, after school, we would all (help at the restaurant).

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: So, I guess, up till the time the war [World War II] started, it was more like a family-run operation?

HK: [Yes.] Mm hmm, mm hmm. It was always a family-run (business). Then, my younger sister was still going to college, but she would come home and help. Then, after we got married, we would go and help. We tried to go and help, although they had working people there. We would go and help them, (whenever we could).

MK: Then, you mentioned that you used to go help like after school and everything. What school did you go to when you were small?

HK: I went to Waikīkī School, and then to Washington Intermediate. I left after I finished Washington. That's when a few families sent their children to Japan. At that time, there were two of my friends from Waikīkī, the Aoki girl (Doris) and the Harakawa girl (Mitsue) going. My mother asked if I wanted to go and visit my grandparents and go to a school in Japan. Because Mrs. [Zenkyo] Komagata from Sōtō-shū, she taught at Tsurumi in Japan. So, she said she would help (make the arrangements). Whoever wanted to go to Tsurumi, she would help to make arrangements. (At that time quite a few families sent their children to Japan to attend school there.)

So, I thought, well, nothing like trying because there were so many girls from Hawai'i at that time in Tsurumi, although I didn't know any of them. (They were from other islands, too.) So, I decided I'll go and visit my grandparents and go to school, although it was very, very hard because it's not like here. They have their strict rules and regulations, being a Buddhist school. At age fifteen, to go (chuckles) through that, you would think,"My goodness." But because there were other girls from Hawai'i and from the other islands, it wasn't too bad. We were all in a dormitory. So, I went there and I entered after I finished intermediate school here. It's completely Japanese. They don't want to put the girls from Hawai'i together, so they put all the girls in different classes, separate classes, so we don't get together and try to speak English all the time. Although when we have break in between classes, we would try to get together. They don't want that because they want us to learn Japanese because they know our parents want us to learn Japanese. But we (did) get together once in a while. Of course, when you get back to the dormitory, most of us are from Hawai'i, so (we would speak more English).

MK: How did you manage, you know, making the switch over to Japanese?

HK: It was pretty hard, because--although we had English class, one hour, not every day--the teachers are (all) Japanese teachers. It was pretty hard. But on the other hand, I guess we felt that we had to (learn) so we somehow managed to learn. The hardest part is, being a Buddhist school, every morning we had to get up early, we all go in the cafeteria (and) before we have our meals, we pray together. This is every day. In the dormitory, we do that. Then when we go to school, again, we all go in the auditorium and we have a short service. Then, the principal will come and have a short speech. Then, we go to our classes. You sit on a hardboard floor. You have to sit Japanese-style. We're not used to that, but we somehow get used to it. I guess it's part of discipline. That's what it was.

MK: Did you have any regrets about having gone to Japan?

HK: No. At that time until we came back, I always thought, "Why did I come?" But now that I'm older, I see the generation changing so fast, I don't regret it. In fact, I feel very thankful. I'm lucky that I was able to go and experience all that and see my grandparents because they're gone now. If I didn't go, I don't think I was able to see them and see where my parents had come from and where they lived. But I was able to at least be with them, see them, and see how they lived.

MK: So, for you, it was a good experience?

HK: Yes. I think I was very, very fortunate. Because these are the things that you cannot buy. You cannot learn from books. It's something I had experienced directly.

MK: Then, I was wondering, when did you come back to Hawai'i?

HK: I came back to Hawai'i in. . . . See, I left here in 1933, and I came back in '39 because it was getting pretty (bad). The China-Japanese war had started. They were rationing things and they were questioning foreigners, especially students from foreign countries. Every once in a while, they would come and question us--why we came to Japan, are we planning to work in Japan or are we planning to live in Japan, and if our parents are sending us our money to support us. Anyway, it was getting pretty (bad). So, I decided that if anything, I don't want to be stuck in Japan. So, I better get (back) fast. So I came back in '39. See, the ship I came back on, the ambassador (of the) United States was leaving, too. And so, I sensed there was something going on. This was on a British ship. I think it was the Empress of Japan. But I remember very, very well that it was the United States ambassador who was on that boat because we had seen his limousine come up to the ship.

MK: You came back just in time?

HK: In time, mm hmm [yes]. Because things were getting pretty bad.

MK: Then, when you came back to Waikīkī, what were the major changes that you noticed from the time you left?

HK: Oh, big, big change because I left in '33, and that's six years. When I left, it was the old store. Now, they had rebuilt the store so it was a nice big change. But somehow, you miss that old atmosphere, ne? You know, you miss that. Because we could go swimming at night and everything was not too modernized. But actually, really, I miss the old Waikīkī, that old store, the old buildings.

MK: Oh, the 1933 Waikīkī?

HK: Yes, yes. Because they had fixed up the beach area, too. They had dug up and built walls. Whereas it wasn't too bad (before), they had sand and you could just jump over the wall. But now you can't do that because they dug up that place where they don't have the sand and all that. (There's rocks there now.)

MK: So was a big change for you, then, the new building, and they changed the beach.

HK: Mm hmm [Yes], mm hmm. And of course, my parents' restaurant. Well, it changed a little, not too much. But it was a change, only they don't have it too fancy, which is good (chuckles).

MK: Then, for yourself, you came back in '39. Then, when did you get married?

HK: I got married in '42. This was (right) after the war [World War II started] so we didn't have time to plan anything big. My husband said he may be drafted. So he says, "Well, let's get married before I go. Because if I get drafted, that's sure I'm going to Europe, because the 442nd [Regimental Combat Unit] boys, they're going." And so, we just made up our mind, we'll get married, never mind all the frills. As long as we get married, we have our marriage license. In fact, I think it was very nice because we (chuckles) didn't have to make any party or anything. But many of our friends were quite upset because we didn't let them know. We didn't have time to let them know. They saw it in the paper. You know, that marriage [notices]--where they have all that legal notice? They [HK's friends] called me and they said, "Why didn't you let us know you were getting married?"

"This is no time to make any announcements. As long as we got married, that's the important thing."

So we went to church. I helped my parents half a day on a Sunday because they were really busy. The defense workers were here from the Mainland. Many of them lived in Waikīkī, so they would come to have their meals. My parents were pretty busy, so we helped. I helped half a day. Our appointment with the minister at the church was in the afternoon. So we went to the church in the afternoon,

we got married, and we came home because it was blackout. You know, after the war started, so you can't have anything (elaborate). So, we brought some food home from the store, and his parents came over. We had family dinner together and that was it.

We didn't go (on a) honeymoon because at that time my husband was working for the post office. Because the military disregarded (his draft call) he wasn't called. So, (after working at the post office), there was an opening at Barber's Point. They needed more workers at Barber's Point. So he decided to go work at Barber's Point. And because we couldn't find a place to rent right away and since my parents had an extra bedroom, we stayed with them for a year. (And I continued to help at my parents' restaurant.)

Then a friend of our parents says that she wanted to buy a place. She was looking for a place in Waikīkī. She says the house was a little too small, so she says, why don't we buy it? But we just got married. We didn't have anything saved. We were in no position to buy. We had to borrow money. Since we were young, we can work hard. So we decided we'll do that. And so, we borrowed. He borrowed from his parents and we borrowed from our parents. And we bought this place in Waikīkī. Because (I was) born and raised in Waikīkī and we always liked (chuckles) Waikīkī, (we thought it was a good idea). We had our children there, which was (really) nice because it's right around the zoo area (and) the beach is close by.

MK: So your home was on Pākī?

HK: Pākī Avenue, yes.

MK: How long did you folks stay there?

HK: We lived there for thirty-four years. And we moved here five years ago. Well, as much as we hated to leave there, we wanted to rebuild because that house was getting old. But the city [i.e., City and County of Honolulu] decided that they'll acquire all that area, so they didn't want us to rebuild. They didn't want us to fix up too much. So, we had no choice. I mean, we couldn't stay there because the house was just deteriorating. Since my parents passed away and they had left this place, we bought out my sisters' share and fixed it up, and moved here five years ago. But Waikīkī is---although it has changed a lot and, of course, where Pākī Avenue is, it was pretty nice. But now the buses pass there and the traffic is pretty heavy, too, (on Pākī Avenue).

MK: When you look back on your long life in Waikīkī, what do you think about having been in Waikīkī?

HK: Oh, I have many, many fond memories. I think it was one of the best parts of my life (in) Waikīkī. I mean, the people, the place. That's why, when you came and mentioned the names of the Waikīkī people, really, it (was) natsukashii because all, everybody was real nice. It was like a family (in) Waikīkī. When we see them

at shopping areas, "Oh, Tahara-san." They (will) call (chuckles) us, "Tahara-san," too. (It was really nice to see them, and to be remembered.)

MK: You have really fond memories of Waikīkī.

HK: Very fond memories. I'm sorry that we had to move. Because my husband liked it there (too) because the golf range is close by, too. If we could have stayed there (we) would stay there. But as it is, now that people can stay there, they had changed their plans. But anytime the administration changes, I think the plans change, so you won't feel settled. (But we will always remember the wonderful times and the wonderful people we knew.)

So, I guess, in a way, at this age, anyway, we wanted to be settled and have a peace of mind. But (now) we can see Waikīkī from here, so that's not too bad, so it's nice. Well, Waikīkī will always be our [home]. . . .

MK: Okay. I'm going to end it here, okay?

END OF INTERVIEW

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